

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for enabling a guest user who is not a registered user of an instant messaging system to communicate by instant messaging with a registered user of the instant messaging system, the method comprising:

receiving an initial indication that the guest user desires to communicate with a selected registered user of the instant messaging system by instant messaging, wherein the initial indication specifically identifies the selected registered user with whom the guest user desires to communicate;

wherein the instant messaging system is associated with at least one other registration-based service;

wherein the guest user is registered with the at least one other registration-based instant messaging system and wherein the guest user signs in using a user name to access the at least one other registration-based instant messaging system;

displaying the user name associated with the guest user with respect to the other service to identify the guest user to the selected registered user;

sending to a client computer system associated with the guest user browser-executable computer code comprising computer instructions for providing at least limited instant messaging functionality to the guest user at the client computer system, without requiring the guest user to download and install client side instant messaging application software and without requiring the guest user to register as a user of the instant messaging system;

wherein providing at least limited instant messaging functionality to the guest user
includes displaying to the guest user an interface that includes controls for sending
instant messages to the selected registered user, but does not include controls for
one or more features provided by the client side instant messaging application
software; and
facilitating an instant messaging session between the guest user and the selected
registered user.

2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein facilitating the instant messaging session comprises delivering instant messages from the guest user to the selected registered user.
3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising providing an entry point configured to receive the initial indication from the guest user that the guest user desires to communicate with the selected registered user by instant messaging.
4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, wherein the entry point is provided in an electronic mail message sent by the selected registered user to the guest user.
5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, wherein the entry point is provided in a web page associated with the selected registered user.
6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, wherein the entry point is provided in an electronic document associated with the selected registered user.

7. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the entry point is provided by computer code comprising code written in the HyperText Markup Language (HTML).
8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving an indication from the selected registered user that the selected registered user would like to incorporate into an electronic mail message to the guest user an entry point configured to receive an indication from the guest user that the guest user desires to communicate with the selected registered user by instant messaging.
9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving an indication from the selected registered user to incorporate into a web page associated with the selected registered user an entry point configured to receive an indication from the guest user that the guest user desires to communicate with the selected registered user by instant messaging.
10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the computer code comprises a browser-executable instant messaging client.
11. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the browser-executable instant messaging client comprises computer instructions in the Dynamic HyperText Markup Language (DHTML).
12. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the browser-executable instant messaging client comprises computer instructions in JavaScript.

13. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the browser-executable instant messaging client comprises computer instructions in ActiveX.

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein displaying the user name associated with the guest user with respect to the other service to identify the guest user to the selected registered user further comprises defining the user name associated with the guest user as a temporary user identification in the instant messaging system.

15. (Canceled)

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein the temporary user identification is at least temporarily deactivated upon termination of the instant messaging session between the guest user and the selected registered user.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein the temporary user identification is valid only for instant messaging with the selected registered user.

18. (Canceled)

19. (Canceled)

20. (Canceled)

21. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein cookie information is used to determine if the guest user is signed in as a user of the at least one other registration-based service.
22. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the computer code is configured to display an instant messaging window to the guest user.
23. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 22, wherein the instant messaging window comprises an area for displaying messages sent by either the guest user or the selected registered user.
24. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 22, wherein the instant messaging window comprises an area for entering the text of a message to be sent and displayed to the selected registered user essentially in real time.
25. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising advising the selected registered user that the guest user is not a registered user.
26. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the selected registered user is associated with a registered user client computer system on which client side instant messaging application software associated with the instant messaging system is installed and the method further comprises disabling, at least with respect to the guest user, at least one feature of the

client side instant messaging application software installed on said registered user client computer system.

27. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 26, wherein disabling, at least with respect to the guest user, at least one feature of the client side instant messaging application software on said registered user client computer system includes a disabling feature that would otherwise have allowed the selected registered user to add the temporary user identification assigned to the guest user to a list of users whose online presence is monitored by the client side instant messaging application software installed on said registered user client computer system.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 26, wherein the at least one feature is one that the computer code sent to the guest user's client computer system does not support.

29. (Currently Amended) A method for enabling an invited user who may not be a registered user of an instant messaging system, said instant messaging system including client side instant message application software, to communicate by instant messaging with an inviting user who is a registered user of the system, the method comprising:

 sending an invitation to the invited user that indicates that the inviting user desires to communicate with the invited user;

 wherein said invitation includes an entry point configured to receive an initial indication from the invited user that the invited user desires to communicate with the selected registered user by instant messaging[[]];

activating said entry point by the invited user, wherein ~~activating~~ ~~aetivating~~ said entry point causes the initial indication that the invited user desires to communicate with the inviting user by instant messaging to be sent;

receiving the initial indication that the invited user desires to communicate with the inviting user by instant messaging, wherein the initial indication specifically identifies the inviting user with whom the guest user desires to communicate;

sending to a client computer system associated with the invited user browser-executable computer code comprising computer instructions for:

determining whether the client side instant messaging application software associated with the instant messaging system is installed in the client computer system; and

in the event it is determined that the client side instant messaging application software associated with the instant messaging system is not installed in the client computer system, providing at least limited instant messaging functionality to the invited user at the client computer system, without requiring the invited user to download and install the client side instant messaging application software and without requiring the invited user to register as a user of the instant messaging system;

wherein providing at least limited instant messaging functionality to the invited user includes displaying to the invited user an interface that includes controls for sending instant messages to the inviting user, but does not include controls for one or more features provided by the client side instant messaging application software; and

facilitating an instant messaging session between the invited user and the inviting user.

30. (Original) The method of claim 29, further comprising:

in the event it is determined that the client side instant messaging application software associated with the instant messaging system is installed in the client computer system, activating and using the installed client side instant messaging application software to enable the invited user to communicate with the inviting user by instant messaging.

31. (Original) The method of claim 29, wherein said computer instructions for determining whether the client side instant messaging application software associated with the instant messaging system is installed in the client computer system comprises computer code written in the JavaScript programming language.

32. (Original) The method of claim 29, wherein said computer instructions for determining whether the client side instant messaging application software associated with the instant messaging system is installed in the client computer system comprises computer code written in the VBScript programming language.

33. (Original) The method of claim 29, wherein said computer instructions for determining whether the client side instant messaging application software associated with the instant messaging system is installed in the client computer system comprises computer code written in the ActiveX programming language.

34. (Currently Amended) A system for enabling a guest user who is not a registered user of an instant messaging system to communicate by instant messaging with a registered user of the system, comprising:

a web server configured to:

receive an initial indication that the guest user desires to communicate with a selected registered user of the instant messaging system by instant messaging, wherein the initial indication specifically identifies the selected registered user with whom the guest user desires to communicate;

wherein the instant messaging system is associated with at least one other registration-based service;

wherein the guest user is registered with the at least one other registration-based instant messaging system and wherein the guest user signs in using a user name to access the at least one other registration-based instant messaging system;

display the user name associated with the guest user with respect to the other service to identify the guest user to the selected registered user; and

send to a client computer system associated with the guest user browser-executable computer code comprising computer instructions for providing at least limited instant messaging functionality to the guest user at the client computer system, without requiring the guest user to download and install client side instant messaging application software and without

requiring the guest user to register as a user of the instant messaging system;

wherein providing at least limited instant messaging functionality to the guest user includes displaying to the guest user an interface that includes controls for sending instant messages to the registered user, but does not include controls for one or more features provided by the client side instant messaging application software; and

an instant messaging server configured to facilitate an instant messaging session between the guest user and the selected registered user.

35. (Original) The system of claim 34, wherein said web server comprises a plurality of servers.

36. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 34, wherein said instant messaging server comprises a plurality of servers.

37. (Currently Amended) A computer program product embodied on a computer readable storage medium for enabling a guest user who is not a registered user of an instant messaging system to communicate by instant messaging with a registered user of the system, the computer program product comprising computer instructions for:

receiving an initial indication that the guest user desires to communicate with a selected registered user of the instant messaging system by instant messaging, wherein the

initial indication specifically identifies the selected registered user with whom the guest user desires to communicate;

wherein the instant messaging system is associated with at least one other registration-based service;

wherein the guest user is registered with the at least one other registration-based instant messaging system and wherein the guest user signs in using a user name to access the at least one other registration-based instant messaging system;

displaying the user name associated with the guest user with respect to the other service to identify the guest user to the selected registered user;

sending to a client computer system associated with the guest user browser-executable computer code comprising computer instructions for providing at least limited instant messaging functionality to the guest user at the client computer system, without requiring the guest user to download and install client side instant messaging application software and without requiring the guest user to register as a user of the instant messaging system;

wherein providing at least limited instant messaging functionality to the guest user includes displaying to the guest user an interface that includes controls for sending instant messages to the selected registered user, but does not include controls for one or more features provided by the client side instant messaging application software; and

facilitating an instant messaging session between the guest user and the selected registered user.

38. (Currently Amended) A method for enabling a guest user who is not a registered user of an instant messaging system to communicate by instant messaging with a registered user of the system, the method comprising:

receiving an initial indication that the guest user desires to communicate with a selected registered user by instant messaging, wherein the initial indication specifically identifies the selected registered user with whom the guest user desires to communicate;

wherein the selected registered user is associated with a registered user client computer system on which client side instant messaging application software associated with the instant messaging system is installed;

sending to a client computer system associated with the guest user browser-executable computer code comprising computer instructions for providing limited instant messaging functionality to the guest user at the client computer system, without requiring the guest user to download and install client side instant messaging application software and without requiring the guest user to register as a user of the instant messaging system;

wherein providing at least limited instant messaging functionality to the guest user includes displaying to the guest user an interface that includes controls for sending instant messages to the registered user, but does not include controls for one or more features provided by the client side instant messaging application software;

~~wherein said limited instant messaging functionality includes~~ disabling, at least with respect to the guest user, at least one feature of the client side instant messaging application software installed on said registered user client computer system;

wherein disabling, at least with respect to the guest user, at least one feature of the client side instant messaging application software on said registered user client computer system includes disabling at least one feature that would otherwise have allowed the selected registered user to add the temporary user identification assigned to the guest user to a list of users whose online presence is monitored by the client side instant messaging application software installed on said registered user client computer system[.]; and
facilitating an instant messaging session between the guest user and the selected registered user.

39. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 38, wherein the disabled feature is one that the computer code sent to the guest user's client computer system does not support.